

STRATEGIC ISSUES

Over the past decade, the Congress has enacted a series of statutory reforms that constitute a modern management framework for more accountable and results-oriented federal management. Strategic Issues (SI) fosters the federal government's transition to this more results-oriented and accountable management while also focusing attention on long-term fiscal and policy challenges. By working with staff agencywide, SI helps create a coherent approach across GAO to the new management reform initiatives, addressing a broader fiscal and performance agenda in the longer term.

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DESCRIPTION OF

our work

We assist the Congress and federal agencies in identifying fiscal challenges facing the government and ways to improve the accountability and performance of government programs. This improvement will become more important as an aging citizenry stresses the budget and eventually limits the government's flexibility to respond to other emerging national needs. In addition, we assess agencies' progress in becoming high-performing, results-oriented organizations; work with agencies to identify opportunities for improved human capital practices; and periodically report on areas within the federal government that we have identified as "high-risk" because of their greater vulnerabilities to waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement.

We are focused on

- facilitating the federal implementation of human capital practices used by high-performing organizations;
- addressing the long-term fiscal health of the federal government;
- analyzing budgetary choices;
- identifying budgetary and management implications of relying on contractors or state or local governments to achieve federal program objectives;
- analyzing and supporting federal efforts to instill results-oriented management across the government; and
- highlighting the specific major management challenges confronting agencies and those federal operations at highest risk of fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement.

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IMPACT OF

our work

Our work on how the aging of the population affects the long-term budget outlook of the nation has informed congressional debates on Social Security and Medicare. In addition, our work on performance budgeting prompted the Office of Management and Budget to strengthen and clarify guidance to agencies, resulting in improved linkages between agencies' performance plans and their budget presentations. We assessed agencies' performance plans and reports and made recommendations on how the Congress and the executive branch could work together to ensure that results-oriented processes are useful to and used by decisionmakers. Our work on human capital issues has helped focus the attention of the executive and legislative branches on the importance of such issues, in particular, their importance in managing for results. Finally, our work on high-risk issues has helped sustain congressional attention on management problems, supporting the enactment of statutory reforms constituting a modern management framework for a more accountable and results-oriented federal management.

HIGHLIGHTS OF RECENT and *future projects*

Fiscal Position of the Government

- Analyze long-term issues in evaluating Social Security reform proposals
- Assess long-term budget and economic implications of alternative fiscal policy paths and policy design
- Examine a new budget and oversight framework in time of surplus
- Study issues in intergovernmental fiscal relations

Recommended Improvements in Federal Programs

- Identify and help determine solutions to major management challenges confronting agencies for the Congress and executive branch decisionmakers
- Identify areas of the federal government at highest risk of waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement

Governmentwide Management and Reforms

- Assess and help strengthen governmentwide strategic management
- Examine hiring, retention, and leadership development in the federal workforce
- Assess selected agencies' human capital management practices
- Examine the role and performance of the Office of Personnel Management in overseeing and improving federal agencies' human capital management
- Determine the extent to which regulatory reform initiatives are achieving objectives